

LIVESTOCK GRAZING



Sequoia National Forest Kern River Ranger Districts

PIONEER COWS: After the gold rush people began making their homes in the foothill country. As the grass dried out the cows were moved up to higher elevations where they grazed through the summer. The cattle almost seemed to know when it was time to come home as the first snows began to coat the Sierras. The practice of grazing in the high country began in the 1870's, 30 years or more before there was a National Forest system.

LAWS FOLLOW USE: Beginning in the 1920's, a grazing permit system was established creating allotment boundaries on National Forest System lands. Today, these pioneer ranching families (called "permittees") continue to follow in their great-grandparents footsteps. In fact, several landmarks on the Sequoia National Forest are named after historical ranching families established over 100 years ago such as **Joughin** Cove, **Scovern** Hot Springs, **Kissack** Cove, **Hanning** Flat, **Cannell** Meadow, **Smith** Meadow and **Taylor** Meadow. All permits on the Sequoia National Forest are still issued to local family ranchers, not large corporations.

COOPERATION: The permit system requires the Forest Service to monitor meadow and stream health, deciding how many cattle can use an allotment without harming the environment. California

Department of Fish and Game and other agencies may be consulted about grazing management practices. In addition, the Forest Service monitors the soil moisture and growth rate of grasses at different elevations; being these factors influence when the grazing season begins. Lower elevation range areas open as early as mid-May. Higher elevation allotments are usually too wet for use until early July. Each meadow system is assigned an allowable use standard, which prescribes the maximum amount of forage that can be removed by the cattle. When this standard is reached, the cattle are moved to other locations or moved off the allotment. Ranchers must spend considerable time herding their cattle in and out of specific areas in order to meet resource objectives. For these reasons, it is important to leave the stock alone and not attempt to disturb them.

FENCES IN THE FOREST? Grazing allotment boundaries often follow natural barriers to cattle movement, such as cliffs, so less fencing is needed. Fences are an important management tool wherever they appear, bounding private property, popular recreation areas and separating different allotment areas. In most cases, gates are provided not only for livestock movement but also for public access to forest areas. Always remember if you need to get through these fences, be sure to close the gates so the cattle won't stray from their designated areas.

HARD WORK: The ranchers maintain fences, cattle troughs and other range facilities. Fences at higher elevations must be taken down each fall and put back up during the spring. If left standing, wires often break from the weight of the snow. Beginning each season, ranchers transport their cattle into the forest by truck although some continue to follow the historical "cattle drive" method. Permittees can spend countless hours during the season, locating and moving cattle, repairing fences and water troughs and ensuring no forest areas are over utilized. In the fall, cattle have to be rounded up and moved back to the home ranch or onto another allotment.

WHAT DOES IT COST? Permittees pay fees to graze their cattle on federal lands, which often intersect private lands of their own. The grazing fee is set annually using a market-driven formula that measures beef prices, private lease rates and costs of production in Western states. A portion of these fees are returned to the Counties where these allotments are located to be used to fund repairs to schools and roads. Grazing fees also supplement the Range Betterment Fund or go directly into the U.S. Treasury.

WHEN IS A COW ...

...MORE THAN A COW?

The cattle industry is an important part of our economy. By-products of cattle serve as source material for hundreds of other industries. The medical world relies on this renewable resource for the pharmaceutical wonders it produces and uses. This is because cattle have great similarities in organic chemical structure to humans. Our bodies will easily accept a medication or treatment made from these animal components. Chemical manufacturers use numerous fatty acids from inedible beef fats and proteins for all

sorts of lubricants and fluids. Antifreeze contains glycerol derived from fatty acids to keep your car running. Tires have stearic acid that makes the rubber hold its shape under continuous surface friction. Glue from colloidal proteins has been used in automobile bodies. Even the asphalt on our roadways has a binding agent from cow fat. When properly managed, grazing cattle can be ecologically useful in precisely the same way the buffalo were. They aerate the soil with their hooves, scatter seeds, and trim wild grasses. Wildfires have a harder time taking hold on short, cropped grass than on longer vegetation.

THE REST OF THE STORY: This is only part of the story. Historically, cattle production has been a family business. Cattle producers must be environmentally responsible if they plan to pass on the business to the next generation. They recognize their crucial role as stewards of land and water and want to ensure an environment that benefits wildlife, plant life, the earth and our society.

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